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KALIDASA'S  
**SAKUNTALA.**

**A**

**METRICAL VERSION**

*ACT I & ACT II WITH AN INTRODUCTION).*

BY

**HARINATH DE,**

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**Calcutta:**

PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY H. W. B. MORENO, B.A.,

AT THE IMPERIAL PRESS,

31-7, DHURRUMTOLLAH STREET,

**1907.**

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## Introduction.

A new translation of *Sakuntala*, when there are so many already in existence, calls for an explanation and the explanation is a very simple one. *Sakuntala* is a lyrical drama strongly resembling in tone and character Tasso's *Aminta* or Guarini's *Pastor Fido*—a fact which none of my predecessors in the field seem to have taken into consideration. Had they done so, they would have translated Kalidasa's dramatic masterpiece not in prose nor in blank verse nor again in blank verse mixed with prose, but in rhymed verse which alone is the adequate vehicle for representing romantic poetry in English. Again here is no satisfactory translation of *Sakuntala* in English. Sir William Jones's version has long been out of date; that of Sir William Monier Williams is full of blunders and gives no better idea of the original than Mickle's *Lusiad* gives of Camoens's epic. In the preface to the revised edition of his version of *Sakuntala*, published in Sir John Lubbock's "Best Hundred Books of the World" the late Boden Professor of Sanskrit writes "that he can honestly say that he did his best to make his representation of Kalidasa's immortal work as true and trustworthy as possible." But, unfortunately, he has underrated the merits of his own performance. I shall cite a few instances to corroborate my statement. In the prologue to the Drama there occurs a beautiful song describing the delights of the summer season which may literally translated as follows :—

"At present are days in which bathing in streams is delightful, in which the forest breezes are fragrant on account of their contact with *patala* flowers, in which sleep is easily brought on in the shade and the close of which is charming."

Or as Dr. Fritze has it :—

"Jetzt sind die Tage, da ein Bad erquickt,  
Da Winde aus dem Walde lieblich duften,  
Wenn dort Bignonienblüthen sie berührten,  
Jetzt wird der Schlaf in Schatten leichtgefunden,  
Und wonnevoll sind jetzt die Abendstunden."

Monier Williams renders :—

"Unceasing are the charms of halcyon days,  
When the cool bath exhilarates the frame,  
When sylvan gales are laden with the scent  
Of fragrant Patalas ; when soothing sleep  
Creeps softly on beneath the deepening shade,  
And when, at last, the dulcet calm of eve  
Entrancing steals o'er every yielding sense."

Take again another passage in which the Hermit remonstrates with the King for the latter's trying to discharge a shaft on the body of a tender fawn :—

"Let not, let not, indeed, that arrow be discharged on the tender body of a fawn, like fire showered on a heap of flowers. How great is the difference between the exceedingly sensitive life of an innocent fawn and your feathered steel-head arrows ! Therefore be pleased to put back your well-aimed arrow. Those arms are meant for protecting sufferers and not for tormenting the innocent."

These lines are exquisitely rendered by Hirzel, who prefers the reading *tulá-ráçau* ('a heap of cotton') to the ordinary *pushpa-ráçau* ('a heap of flowers') :—

"O wie doch, o wie ?

Der Pfeil da für sie ?

Er würd' ein Feu'r in Wollenballen,

Auf süßen Hindinn-Leib ja fallen !

## Sakuntala

Der Hindinn Leben  
Erzittert so sehr ;  
Dein spitzer Pfeil da  
Verwundet so schwer !  
O, so leg das Geschoss,  
In den Köcher in Eil !

Ihr habt ja zum Schutze des Armen bloss,  
Den Guten zu schädigen nicht, den Pfeil.'

Monier Williams' rendering runs as follows :—

"Now heaven forbid this barbed shaft descend  
Upon the fragile body of a fawn,  
Like fire upon a heap of tender flowers,  
Can thy steel-head bolts no meeter quarry find  
Than *the warm life-blood of a harmless deer* ?  
Restore, great Prince, thy weapon to its quiver.  
More it becomes thy arms to shield the weak,  
Than to bring anguish on the innocent."

Lastly, let us take the famous passage about the bee (Act I) that flew at Sakuntala's face. Dushyanta apostrophises the bee in lines of which the following is a literal rendering :—

"In whichever direction the bee turns towards the maiden, her rolling eye is darted in that direction. Bending her brows through fear, she is already learning coquettish-movements of the eye even through as yet she is uninfluenced by love. And thou, O bee, touchest repeatedly her quivering eye, whose outer-corner moves playfully. Going close to her ear, thou art softly humming as if whispering a secret of love. Thou art drinking her lip that contains all the treasures of delight while she waves her hand. We, on the other hand, O bee, in our enquiry into the truth of the maiden's origin are baffled, whereas thou indeed art lucky."

Hirzels happily renders it :—

"Wohin, wohin immer das Bienchen sich bewegt  
Von da, von da fieheth die Lieblich-äug'ge weg :  
Sie fernt indem jetzt sie die Brauen bloss aus Furcht  
Zusammenzieht, fern auch von Anest das Augenspiels."

## Introduction.

O die du die Augen mit zitternden Winkeln  
Ihr streifest so lose,  
In's Ohr ihr zu flüstern ein Liebesgeheimniss'  
In süßem Gekose ;  
Und während da jene versucht mit dem Händchen  
Dir immer zu wehren,  
O die du ja dennoch die Lippen ihr trinkest,  
Das höchste Begehren !  
Ach, immer im Suchen nach Wahrheit versunken  
Wo fänden wir Ruh ?  
Du aber, O Honigerzeugerin, dorten  
Wie selig bist du !"

Monier Williams renders :—

"Where'er the bee his eager onset plies  
Now here, now there, she darts her kindling eyes,  
What love hath yet to teach, fear teaches now,  
*The furtive glances and the frowning brow.*  
Ah happy bee ! how boldly dost thou try  
*To steal the lustre from her sparkling eye ;*  
And in thy circling movements hover near,  
To murmur tender secrets in her ear ;  
Or, as she coyly waves her hand, to sip,  
*Voluptuous nectar from her lower lip !*  
*While rising doubts may heart's fond hopes destroy,*  
Thou dost the fulness of her charms enjoy."

Numerous other examples can be cited to show that Monier Williams has not been fortunate in his attempt to present Sakuntala in an occidental garb. The best translation of Sakuntala in any European language is that by Professor Dr. Ludwig Fritze of Köpenick. I have followed Professor Fritze's example in taking Professor Pischel's edition of the Bengali recension of the drama as my text. Occasionally I have ventured to correct Professor Pischel's text as will be seen from the footnotes to my version of Sakuntala. I agree with Professor Pischel in regarding

the Bengali recension as the original form of the text of *Sakuntala*.

I have differed from the learned German translator whose name I have just now mentioned in my interpretation of the following passages :—

(1) Act I. (Ed. Pischel p. 23.)

Dushyanta rises up as if desirous of holding *Sakuntala* back and then restrains himself saying :—

“*Aho ceshtâ-pratirûpikâ kâmino manovritti.*”

Professor Fritze renders :—

“*Ach, wie doch bei Liebenden  
Das Denken steht in Einklang mit des Körpers  
Bewegungen.*”

Monier Williams entirely misses the point and renders this as :—

“*Ah ! a lover's feelings betray  
Themselves by his gestures.*”

But the real and correct meaning and one that suits the context is :—

“*The thoughts of a lover correspond to what he wishes to do.*”

Or in the words of Lope de Vega :—

“*Muchas veces piensa amor  
Que hace lo que imagina.*”

I have rendered it accordingly :—

“*How the mere thought comes to be  
A moment's rapt reality  
In a lover love-oppressed !*”

Professor Pischel regards this explanation to be the correct one.

(2) Act II. (Ed. Pischel p. 38.) :—

The beautiful stanzas in which Dushyanta describes Sakuntala's beauty by similes, contain the following expressions :—

“Anāmuktam ratnam . . . . akhandam punyanām phalam.”

Monier Williams renders them :—

“A gem of priceless water just released  
Pure and unblemished from its glittering bed,  
Or may the maiden be compared. . . . . to the mellowed fruit  
Of virtuous actions in some former birth  
Now brought to full perfection ?”

Professor Fritze's translation runs :—

“Die Perle, die noch nicht zum Schmuck gedient. . .  
Die ganze, volle Frucht der guten Werke.”

The Sanskrit is rather ambiguous but the context settles the meaning. Sakuntala is compared to ‘a gem as yet unworn’ and to ‘a fruit *reserved* for pious deeds.’ In other words, union with the peerless maiden is regarded as the reward of pious deeds performed in an anterior birth by the man who is destined to win her: Monier Williams is quite mistaken in interpreting the expression as referring to the beauty of Sakuntala, which he supposes the poet to regard as the fruit of the pious deeds done by the maiden in her former birth. I translate the lines in question in the following manner :—

“This fair gem  
That none yet wore as ornament.  
This reserved fruit  
For pious deeds in past lives done.”

The idea is not uncommon in Indian literature. A lover's song, in the Dighá Nikāya which is quite as old as the fourth century B.C. contains the very same idea :—

"Yam me atthi katam punnam asmim puthuvi-mandale

Tam me sabbaṅga-kalyāṇī tayā saddhim vipaccatam."

"Yes, whatever deeds of virtue in this world were done by me,

All their fruits, supremely blest one, may I reap with only thee."

In conclusion, I beg leave to repeat that my version follows the text of the Bengali recension as edited by Professor Pischel. I shall feel very grateful if my readers would inform me of any errors which they may detect in my translation. The remaining acts will follow in due course.

HARINATH DE.

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*March 28th, 1907.*

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# SAKUNTALA.

## Introduction.

### Benediction.

Isá\* your protector be !  
Whom in eight forms clear we see—  
In the first of all creations,†  
In the carrier of oblations,‡  
In the sacrificing priest,  
In the orbs of night and day,  
In ether which doth sounds convey  
All-pervading, and in air  
Which gives breath to man and beast,  
And in earth which sages all                      10  
Womb of things created call.  
Isá keep you in his care !

[*After the Benediction.*]

### Actor.

Why waste more words ?

[*Looking towards the tiring-room.*]

---

\* Isá—(*i. e.* the Lord) is one of names of Sivá—the favourite divinity of Kalidása. Sivá is regarded as a god endowed with eight forms *viz.* that of the five elements (earth, fire, air, water, ether), of the sun, the moon and the sacrificer.

† *i. e.* water.

‡ *i. e.* fire.

## *Introduction.*

---

My lady sweet !  
When your dressing is complete  
Will you kindly come this way ?

[*Enter Actress*]

**Actress.**

Here I am ! What hest, I pray ?

**Actor.**

Lady lo ! to-day we meet  
Before a learned throng, to play  
Sakuntalá, a drama new  
By Kalidás, so each must pay  
To his part attention due.

**Actress.**

What can e'er be found amiss  
In the parts assigned by you ?

**Actor**—[*Smiling.*]

Lady, the real truth is this :—  
“ I never praise the actor's skill  
Till the learned him applaud ;  
E'en the best trained actor will  
With doubt and diffidence be awed.”

**Actress.**

Right ! But what must I now do ?

Actor.

Charm but the hearing of this throng ! 30

Actress.

And for the subject of my song  
What season shall I choose ?

Actor.

Employ

For that this season—'tis but young—  
Summer sweet, the time of joy.  
"To bathe in streams what joy divine !  
When sylvan gales waft scents from flowers,  
To sleep invite the shady bowers  
And grateful is the day's decline."

Actress—[Sings.]

"With ruthful fingers damsels twine  
Sirisha-blossoms† round their ears, 40  
Velvet-tipped their fibres fine,  
Flowers which bee's soft kiss endears."

Actor.

Charming ! Your enrapturing song  
Spell-bound holds this listening throng.  
Picture-like they gaze ! What play  
To please them shall we act to-day ?

\* The text has "*Patala-flowers*" (i. e. *Bignonia suaveolens*.)

† The flowers of *Acacia Sirisha* were used by Indian ladies as ear-ornaments. See Act I, line 459 of my translation.

## *Introduction.*

---

### **Actress.**

Noble sir, why not that same  
Which had first allured your thought ?  
Sakuntalá 'tis called by name.  
Let us act it.

### **Actor.**

Thanks ! I had forgot. 50.

“ O Lady, my spirit was ravished away,  
So deep did your music enrapture my ear  
Even as Dushyanta wanders astray  
Pursuing a fleet-foot antelope here.”

[*Exeunt.*]

[*Here ends the Introduction.*]

---

Act. I.

Scene—A Forest.

*Enter King Dushyanta armed with a bow and arrows in a chariot and chasing an antelope, attended by his charioteer.*

Charioteer

[*Looking at the deer, and then at the King*] :—  
My liege,

Your bowstring drawn when I behold  
And gaze upon the speckled deer,  
How Siva chased that deer of old,  
Methinks, I see in vision clear.

King.

O charioteer, this speckled fawn  
Far from our pathway hath us drawn.  
How graceful, see, his neck is bent,  
As momentarily he turns his glances  
Towards my chariot's swift advances,  
While, fearful of my shaft's descent, 10  
His forelimbs, lo, still onward hieing  
He draws within his haunches, strewing  
The road with grass he had been chewing,

---

\* Siva not being invited to Daksha's sacrifice, was so indignant that he confounded the sacrifice, dispersed the guests and chasing Yajna the God of Sacrifice who fled in the form of a deer, overtook and decapitated him.

Which from his panting mouth keeps flying.  
 Look ! Look ! Again from earth upspring  
 He seems to be in mid-air swinging.

[ *With astonishment.* ]

Scarce possible to keep, indeed,  
 Within sight, swift though I pursue ! .

Charioteer.

Since full of hollows is this ground,  
 O King, the reins I tightly drew,  
 And slackened thus the chariot's speed.

Therefore is the distance found  
 Great, betwixt us and the deer.

But now on level earth we stand:  
 It cannot long elude you here.

King.

Let loose the reins, then, charioteer.

Charioteer.

I'll do, my liege, as you command.  
 But look ! O look !

[ *Drives the chariot at full speed.* ]

The reins they are loosened, the steeds they  
 career,  
 As though they endured not the speed of the  
 deer.

Their forelimbs are strained, the *chowries*\*  
 that make

The crests on their head-gear seem scarcely  
 to shake. 30

---

\* A decoration formed of the white bushy tail of the yak.

ungrazed

**King**—[*Joyfully.*] •

Methinks the coursers in their speed  
Outstrip the Sun's or Indra's\* steed.

Now what is parted seems like one ;

So swiftly doth my chariot run

40

**A voice behind the scenes.**

Forbear, O king, to kill this deer

**Charioteer.**

*[Listening and looking round]*

I ween

Two hermits, lord, have come between

**King**

[*Hastily.*]

**Pull up the reins, then, charioteer.**

## Charioteer.

To hear, O king, is to obey.

[Stops the chariot.]

*[Enter a hermit and two others with him.]*

**Hermit**

*[Raising his hand.]*

Here me, O noble king, this deer  
 Comes from our hermitage. From frame  
 So tender, pray, avert your showers  
 Of arrows. Were it not the same 50  
 To pour hot flames on a heap of flowers ?  
 To think that a feather'd steel-head dart  
 Should transfix a gentle hart !  
 'Twere better, sure, your arrows went  
 Back to their quiver. Those arms are meant  
 To champion sufferers, not to torment  
 The creatures that are innocent.

**King**

*[Bows to the hermits.]*

Look I replace it.

*[Replaces the arrow in its quiver.]*

**Hermit.**

Rightly done

Of one who is the shining sun  
 Of Puru's\* race. A son of worth 60  
 Unmatch'd—be yours to rule this earth !

---

\* Dushyanta was sixteenth in descent from Puru, the most famous of his ancestors.

---

**King.**

[*Bowing.*]

Thy priestly blessing I accept.

**Hermit.**

We have come hither to collect  
Fuel, O king. The mighty sage  
Kanwa hath his hermitage†  
Yonder on‡ Malini's bank ; and here,  
O King, so it not thwart your sphere  
Of purpose, enter and take rest,  
Enjoy the honour of a guest.  
And when you see the hermit's rite  
Performed unhindered, you will know  
What safety spreads that hand of might  
Scarred by drawing oft the bow.

**King.**

The holy sage—abides he there ?

**Hermit.**

To Sakuntala, his daughter fair,  
Injunctions hath he given to treat  
Guests that come with welcome meet.  
As for Lord Kanwa, he is gone  
To Somatirtha§ ; thither drawn  
By a deep longing, some dark fate  
That threatens her, to propitiate.

---

† I regard the words between ' *Kanvasva* ' and ' *anumalinitram* ' as a gloss and therefore do not translate them.

‡ A right hand tributary of the Ganges at some distance from Delhi.

§ A holy place somewhere near the modern Panipat.

---

King.

O Hermit, if it should be so,  
I'll see her and, I do believe,  
From her the sage will come to know  
Of my devotion.

Hermit.

Sire, our leave  
We take now.

*[Exit with his two companions.]*

King.

Urge the horses on.  
A visit to this holy seat  
Will make us holier.

Charioteer.

I obey.

*[Drives the chariot very quickly.]*

King.

*[Looking all about him.]*

O charioteer, though none did say  
So much, 'tis surely clear as day  
That this our chariot now doth move  
In precincts of the penance-grove.

Charioteer.

How learnt you ? Tell me, I entreat.

## King.

Dost thou not 'neath yon trees behold  
 Grains of the wild rice scatter'd ? These  
 Methinks, have dropt from holes in trees  
 Which the parrot-lineage hold.

Scatter'd also round about

Oil-smear'd stones I seem to see,

Such as from fruits of *ingudi*\* 100

Are used to press their kernel out.

Again, observe those herds of deer,

How heedless roam they near and far,

And brook the rattling of our car,

Because their heart is void of fear.

Drops of water from the bark,†

The hermit's vesture, oozing mark

With streaks the paths by which they bring

Water from the liquid spring.

Channels,‡ see, there are that lave 110

The roots of yonder trees,

Of which every little wave

Is rippling in the breeze,

While chequered seems each tender spray

Thanks to the fumes that rise,

From melting butter duly thrown.

On flames of sacrifice.

---

\* A tree, known also as the *Anchorite's tree* (*tāpasataru*) from the fruit of which oil was extracted, which hermits used for their lamps and for ointment.

† i. e. Dresses made of barks were worn by hermits.

‡ i. e. Trenches dug round the roots of trees to collect water.

And, see, there are young fawns at play  
Within the penance-grove,  
As if their hearts had never known 120  
A fear, o'er lawns, from which is mown  
The sacred grass, they rove.

Charioteer.

I understand.

King.

*[Advancing a little further.]*

I pray thee, stay  
The chariot here, where I'll descend,  
So that no rude disturbance may  
The dwellers of the grove offend.

Charioteer.

*[Stops the chariot.]*

I hold the reins in, King, alight.

King.

*[Alighting.]*

O charioteer, it is not right  
To enter penance-groves with aught  
But humble garments. Therefore, hold 130  
The bow and vestures which I brought.

*[Delivers his dresses and bow to the  
charioteer.]*

And by the time I shall retrace  
My footsteps from the grove, pray see  
The steeds are bathed.

## Charloteer.

Even as told,  
My liege, your hest perform'd shall be.

[*Exit.*]

## King.

[*Walking and looking about.*]

I'll enter now. This seems the place.

[*Entering and feeling a throbbing sensation  
in his arm.*]

Purest peace this spot doth sway ;

What means my right arm's throbbing still ?\*

How can this hermit-grove fulfil

The joy this throbbing bodeth ? Nay, 140

Everywhere Fate finds a way

To work, whene'er it may, its will.

A voice behind the scenes.

O this way, friends !

## King.

[*Listening.*]

I hear a talking

Towards the south of yonder glades,

And thither do I purpose walking.

[*Walking and looking about.*]

But look ! Here come the hermit-maids

A-watering trees. Each carries weight

Proportion'd to her frame—a jar.

---

\* A quivering sensation in the right arm is supposed to prognosticate union with a beautiful woman.

[*Gazing at them.*]

Heavens ! Of what graceful form they are !

If such peerless beauty, rare 150

Even in palaces, here dwell,

Forest-blossoms, I declare,.

Would the garden's growth excel.

So in this shadow let me wait.

[*Stands gazing at them.*]

[*Enter Sakuntala with her two female companions, employed in the manner described.*]

Sakuntala.

This way, O friends, pray, come this way.

Anasuya.

O Sakuntala, hear me, pray,

Dearer far, it seems to me,

Those trees unto your father be

Than your dear self, my dear ; for, though

You are more tender than fresh-blown 160

Jasmine-flowers, why hath he so

Task'd you to fill with water these

Basins at the roots of trees ?

Sakuntala.

'Tis not my father's hest alone.

I too such love towards them bear

As they my own dear brothers were

Or sisters.

[*Continues watering the shrubs.*]

Anasuya.

We have given their share  
Of water to the trees that bend  
With summer-flowers. Let us pour  
On trees whose flowering time is o'er 170  
Some water now ; for boon that's given  
Without a thought of guerdon, friend,  
Is pleasing most unto high Heaven.

King.

Is this Sage Kanwa's child ? Ah me !  
Hard-hearted must sage Kanwa be  
Upon her tender limbs to press  
Rude bark of the hermit-dress.  
For he who wishes to inure  
To penance such a beauteous frame,  
Which least adorned doth most allure, 180  
Such a one may well endeavour  
With blue lotus-leaf to sever,  
The obdurate acacia's stem.\*

Well ! hiding now behind the trees  
I'll watch her unabashed at ease.

[*Conceals himself.*]

Sakuntala,

O Anasuya, I am pained  
By this bark-vesture which the hands  
Of Priyamvada have fastened. Friend,  
I pray thee, loosen thou these bands.

[*Anasuya loosens them.*]

---

\* The Sami tree (*Acacia, Suma*) the wood of which is very hard, is supposed by the Hindus to contain fire.



Which, as the gentle breezes blow  
Betwixt them, look like fingers ;\* so  
I'll go and tend it.

[ *Walks towards it.* ]

Priyamvada.

O dear friend,  
Prithee, just there one moment bide.

Sakuntala.

Wherefore ?

Priyamvada.

With you at his side,  
That *kesar* tree appears to blend  
As with a creeper's graceful frame.

Sakuntala.

[ *Smiling.* ]

Ah ! • Thus thou didst obtain, forsooth,  
Sweet speaker, thine own lovely name  
Priyamvadā.†

King,

Sweet speech but truth.‡ 220

As the sprouting leaves her lips are red,  
As the lithe bough is her either arm,  
Like the bloom in a flower does youth spread  
Through her sweet limbs a luring charm.

\* Cf. Wordsworth :—" *The budding twigs spread out their fan &c.*"

† ' *Priyamvadā* means ' Sweet Speaker.'

‡ I read "*priyam ap' lathyam āha.*"

Anasuya.

Sakuntala, 'tis here, O see,  
That jasmine. She the mango-tree  
Elected for her spouse and thou  
Named'st her *Forest Moonlight*?

Sakuntala.

[*Approaching the plant and looking at it.*]

Now,

How glad a season they have chose  
For their sweet union ! For, behold, 230  
The *Forest Moonlight* doth unfold  
Her youth in flowers. The mango-tree  
Drest in new leaves, doth seem to me  
Fresh for enjoyment.

[*Continues gazing at it.*]

Priyamvada.

Dost thou know  
Anasuya, why she gazeth so  
Fixed on the *Forest Moonlight*?

Anasuya.

No,

I know not. Príthee, friend, disclose.

Priyamvada.

Within her heart of hearts she saith :—  
“As the jasmine weds the mango-tree, 240  
Him may I wed who merits me.”

---

Sakuntala.

There, girl, thy own thought spoke, in faith.

[ *Continues watering the trees.* ]

Anasuya.

Sakuntala, hast thou forgot

This *madhavi*\* that with such care

As thee did our own father rear ?

'Tis here.

Sakuntala.

O friend, I would as soon

Forget myself.

[ *Going to the plant and looking at it with joy.* ]

A boon, a boon,

For wondrous tidings I have brought.

Priyamvada.

What is it ? Tell me, I implore.

Sakuntala.

Though now the season is no more,

250

You, sweet creeper, doth from root

To top with blossoms burgeon o'er.

Anasuya and Priyamvada.

[ *Quickly going to the creeper.* ]

True ! True !

Sakuntala.

What see you now, my friends ?

Priyamvada.

(Smiling.)

I soon shall tell you what portends  
This, when in marriage tied you'll be.

Sakuntala.

(Angrily.)

You do transfer your wish to me.

Priyamvada.

I am not jesting. I learnt this  
From father. Your connubial bliss.  
My friend, it bodeeth, past dispute.

Anasuya.

Prithce just look, how lovingly  
Sakuntala doth water now  
The creeper's root.

260.

Sakuntala.

Why should I not ?

As my own sister from time past  
I have regarded it.

(Continues watering it.)

King.

O how

I wish that it may prove her lot  
Mothered to be of other caste \*  
To Kanwa's ! Nay, away with doubt !

---

\* In that case Dushyanta being of the warrior-caste could marry her.  
A member of the warrior caste could not marry a girl born of a brahmin  
father and a brahmin mother.

Sure, with us warriors she can wed ;  
Seeing, for her my heart doth yearn.  
The promptings of the good, 'tis said,  
The scale in dubious matters turn.  
The truth, the truth I shall find out.

270

Sakuntala.

*(In a flurry.)*

Help ! From the jasmine-flowers a bee  
Is flying at my face.

*[Attempts to drive it away.]*

King.

*[Gazing at her ardently.]*

Ah me !

For wheresoe'er the bee now flies,  
The maiden turns her fluttering eyes,  
Though she's a stranger yet to love,  
Already her swift terrors move,  
Their pupils, as in coquetry.

*(In a tone of envy.)*

And thou art happy wandering bee,  
For while I wretched do assay  
Her birth to fathom, thou dost stray  
Touching her dear eyes momentarily,  
The edges of whose lids do quiver;  
Since terror of thee ne'er doth leave her.  
And as thou hoverest past her ear  
A-humming, thou therein dost pour

280

Love's secrets, while the maid in fear  
Waves her hands, and thou dost sip  
Love's summed essence in her lip.

**Sakuntala.**

O ! from this plague deliver me !

290

**Anasuya and Priyamvada.**

*[Smiling.]*

Deliver you ? Ah, how can we ?  
Call Dushyanta to your aid.  
'Tis he protects each hermit-glade.

**King.**

Now is the time for me to show  
Myself to them. Why should I fear ?

*[Checks himself when the words  
are half-uttered. Aside.]*

But stay ! That will but make them know  
My rank. Let be ! I'll pass for guest  
New come.

**Sakuntala.**

*[Moving a step or two further off.]*

The monster will not rest.  
To shun him elsewhere I must go.  
Again he comes to me. Help ! Ho !

300

**King.**

*[Advancing hastily]*

When the great son of Puru sways  
The earth and Mischief curbs her ways,  
Who, who is this Presumption aids

To harm the harmless hermit-maids?

[*All look at the King and are embarrassed.*]

Anasuya

'Twas nothing serious. This our friend

[*Points to Sakuntala.*]

Was by a wicked bee distressed.

King.

[*Turning to Sakuntala.*]

I hope your penance gloriously  
Doth prosper. \*

[*Sakuntala stands confused and silent.*]

Anasuya

Yes, because a guest

So noble as yourself hath deigned  
A visit.

Priyamvada.

Welcome, sir, and thou

310

Sakuntala, to cottage go,  
Bring fruits and bring too offerings meet.  
This water here will wash his feet.

King.

Offerings plenteous to me  
Are your words so kind and sweet.

---

\* This is the regular formula of salutation addressed to hermits and hermitesses:

Anasuya.

May it please you, sir, to rest  
A little while upon this seat  
Beneath the *saptaparna*\* tree  
Whose shade drops coolness.

King.

And you too

320

Must be for wearied with your task  
Of piety : so let me ask  
Of you to sit awhile.

Priyamvada.

[ *Aside to Sakuntala.* ]

But, friend

Sakuntala, speak I aright ?  
Should we not our good guest attend ?  
Near him a seat let us then take.

[ *All sit down together.* ]

Sakuntala. [ *Aside.* ]

Ah me ! What aileth me ? The sight  
Of this new stranger, doth awake  
Emotions in me strange and new  
Ill-suited to a hermitage.

King.

( *Looking at all by turns.* )

Delightful must your friendship be !  
You are so like in form and age.

330

---

i. e. *Echites solaris* a tree having seven leaves on a stalk.

Priyamvada.

[ *Aside to Anasuya.* ]

Who is this, Anasuya, pray,  
So handsome, yet so dignified,  
Whose courteous converse doth display  
A sovereign majesty allied  
With mildness ?

Anasuya.

[ *Aside to Priyamvada.* ]

I too, dearest friend,  
Am all as curious to know.  
I'll question him.

(*Aloud.*)

Distinguished Sir !

So courteous are your words, they lend  
Courage to question what high line  
Of royal sages you adorn.  
What country may your absence mourn ?  
And, pray you, tell us what could move  
Your honoured self to undergo  
Exposure and travail indign  
In journey to this penance-grove.

340

Sakuntala.

[ *Aside.* ]

O heart impatient, pull thou not  
At me for utterance ! For with him,  
See, Anusuya doth confer  
Of that which laboured so thy thought.

350

King.

[*Aside.*]

What best to do now ? Or betray  
My person and my rank ? Or hide  
The knowledge from these maids ? Let be !

(*Aloud.*)

Ladies, great Puru's progeny  
I serve. The Vedas well I know.  
'Tis mine o'er justice to preside  
In the great city. Now I go  
Journeying the holy places through,  
So hither have I turned my way.

Sakuntala.

Then hermits may now live secure 360  
Under a guardian's watchful care.

[*Sakuntala gazes bashfully at the King.*]

Priyamvada & Anasuya.

[*Perceiving the state of her feelings and that of the  
King. Aside to Sakuntala.*]

If, Sakuntala my dear,  
Our father were now present here—

Sakuntala.

[*Angrily.*]

Well, what then ?

Priyamvada & Anasuya.

He would not spare \*

His life's best treasure, I am sure,  
To honour this distinguished guest.

**Sakuntala.**

[*Angrily.*]

Away ! What's brewing in your heart ?  
I will not hear.

**King.**

Will you impart,  
Ladies, some news about your friend ?

**Anasuya.**

Favoured we feel by this request.

370

**King.**

A life ascetic wedlock-free  
Hath Kanwa led unto this day ;  
Her father—how then can he be ?

**Anasuya.**

Nay, good Sir, doth not one live  
A king-born sage of puissant sway,  
Who doth from Kusa's race descend ?\*

**King.**

There lives one. What of him ? I pray.

**Anasuya.**

'Twas he, this maiden here begot.  
To Kanwa, for the care he's taken  
In rearing her a babe forsaken,  
A father's name our friend doth give.

380

\* i. e. The great sage Visvamitra (great-grandson of Kusika or Kusa) who raised himself by his austerities from the warrior-caste to that of a brahmin.

King.

“A babe forsaken”—wonder-fraught  
And strange your tale is. So her lot  
From its commencement let me hear.

Anasuya.

You shall, good Sir. In time long past  
That mighty sage of regal caste  
Practised austerities severe—  
Acts at whose awfulness no god  
But trembled stricken with alarm.  
To interrupt his aim, I hear, 390  
Fair Menaka, a nymph, they sent.

King.

Yes, I know, the gods are awed  
Ever to see us mortals bent.  
On such penances austere. †  
What followed next?

Anasuya.

The sweet, sweet Spring  
Was come and he stood marvelling  
At her inebriating charm.

King.

I guess the sequel. She, 'tis clear,  
Was of that nymph born.

Anasuya.

Just so, sir,

---

† “Penances are cheques which the gods must endorse”—Southey.

King.

Surely, none else could mother her. 400  
To such a radiant thing of light.  
Could aught that's mortal e'er give birth?  
The lighting's flash that quivereth bright  
Rises not from under earth.

[*Sakuntala remains modestly seated with down-  
cast eyes.*]

[*Aside.*]

Now, may my longings be fulfilled.

Priyamvada.

[*Looking with a smile at Sakuntala and then  
turning towards the King.*]

Methinks, more knowledge you desire.

[*Sakuntala makes a chiding gesture  
with her finger.*]

King.

O lady, rightly have you guessed,  
From eagerness to hear of great  
And noble lives, I shall request,  
You tell me what I would enquire. 410

Priyamvada.

Pray, Sir, do not hesitate.  
We're hermitesses and may be  
Questioned unreservedly.

King.

Must she observe the hermit-vow,  
Which balks the Love-god's arrows now,

Until her sire this maid bestows  
 In marriage ? Or must her sweet days  
 For ever mate her with shy does  
 Belov'd of her, because their gaze  
 Such beauty as her own displays ?

420

**Priyamvada.**

Unto this day, Sir, hath our friend  
 The strict life of a hermit led.  
 But the sage Kanwa doth intend  
 She should a worthy husband wed.

**King.**

[*Aside.*]

Cherish, O heart, thy dear desire ;  
 From doubts henceforward thou art free.  
 What to thee once burned a fire,  
 Shines a gem that touched can be.

**Sakuntala.**

[*Pretending to be angry.*] •

I must hie hence.

**Anasuya.**

Ah ! wherefore, dear ?

**Sakuntala.**

To bring to Dame Gautāmi's ear  
 What nonsense Priyamvada speaks here.

430

**Anasuya.**

Sakuntala, it is not fit  
 For hermitesses thus to quit

---

\* She is the Mother Superior of the female section of this society of hermitesses.

Wilfully a noble guest  
Ere we give him welcome meet.

[ *Sakuntala moves away without answering a word.* ]

King.

[ *Making a movement to arrest her departure, but checking himself. Aside.* ]

Ah! whither doth the maiden stray?  
How the mere thought comes to be  
A moment's rapt reality  
In a lover love-oppressed ! †  
For though now I burned to go  
After her sweet footsteps, I  
Checked by grave propriety  
Did my forward movement stay.  
Yet, it seems as though my feet  
Those few steps with her did hie  
And came back with her.

440

[ *Holding Sakuntala back.* ]

Anger'd so,  
You must not be ; for sure, no gain  
'Twould bring you, thus to go away.

( *Frowning.* )

What mean'st thou?

Friend, to me you owe  
Two waterings. First, pay off that debt ;  
Then go, wherever you are fain.

450

---

† This is the only interpretation of the difficult passage which seems consistent with the lines that follow. Professor Pischel thinks my interpretation to be the correct one.

[*Forcing her to turn back.*]

Tired must the gentle maiden be  
 Watering her trees; for do but look !  
 Her shoulders droop and both her arms  
 Glow with exertion lifting oft  
 The water jar. Her bosom soft  
 Doth with her quick breath palpitate.  
 Her face too is bedewed with sweat,  
 That mars the *sirisha*-pendant's\* charms.  
 A straying lock, whose fillet-band 460  
 Hath dropt, she holds up with one hand.  
 From that debt now I'll set her free.

[*Offers a ring to Priyamvada. Both the maidens,  
 reading the name 'Dushyanta' on the seal, look at  
 each other with surprise.*]

Nay, maidens, do not suffer me  
 For this ring's lord to be mistook.  
 It is a present from my King.

[*Returning the ring to Dushyanta.*]

You must not part then with the ring.  
 Freed by your mere desire is she,

(*To Sakuntala.*)

And since our good guest—or indeed  
 Shall I say, prince?—doth intercede  
 On your behalf, I shall forego 470  
 Strict payment of the debt you owe.  
 So whither would you now away ?

\* See the last footnote on page 3.

---

Sakuntala.*(Aside.)*

Were I but mistress of my will,  
I would not leave him.

Priyamvada.

Tarrying still,  
Sakuntala ?

Sakuntala.

Thou dost forget  
I am no longer in thy debt.  
To go where'er I wish, I'm free.

King.

*[ Gazing at Sakuntala. Aside ]*

Can it be, this maid so shy  
Feels towards me even as I  
Towards her. Be what will, my hope  
That seemed so fruitless, findeth scope.  
For, though she mix no speech with me,  
She leans her ear attentively  
To all I speak ; though she not dare  
To stay before my countenance,  
Yet—I have marked her—doth forbear  
On aught in chief to fix her glance.

480

A voice behind the Scences.

O hermits, haste to save the deer  
That within your precincts dwell,  
For, Dushyanta, we hear tell,  
Doth a-hunting hither near.

490

The dust-clouds that his horse-hooves raise  
Are red-gold in the sun-set's blaze,  
And down, like the swarming locust-flight,  
They do upon the trees alight,  
The trees upon whose branches dark  
Are hung the dripping robes of bark.

King.

(*Aside.*)

Ah spite ! My followers in their quest  
To find me do these groves infest.

A voice behind the Scenes.

An elephant, O hermits, come 500  
Unto our holy forest-home,  
Goes casting terror and doth roam  
'Midst timorous women and among  
Men too old and boys too young.  
See, see, into the hermitage

The mighty elephant hath burst  
By the chariot terrified ;

And his entrance hath dispersed  
The timid deer that here abide.

An obstacle incarnate he 510  
To our austerities doth rage.

Already one tusk he hath broke  
Wherewith he dealt a mighty stroke

On his obstructor—a tall tree ;

And he draggeth violently

Creepers that around him wind,

That his frame like fetters bind.

---

King.

[ *All rise up hastily.* ]

Heavens ! To these how base a part  
I play committing grievous wrong.  
There is no help. I must along  
To meet them.

520

Priyamvada and Anasuya.

With fear-stricken heart,  
Good sir, these tidings do we hear.  
O permit us leave to take.  
To our cottage we will make  
Our way.

Anasuya.

( *To Sakuntala.* )

Sakuntala my dear,  
Dame Gautami for our sake  
Must in deep disquiet be.  
Do not let us stay apart  
Longer from her.

Sakuntala.

( *Walking slowly* )

Woe is me !  
Numbed are my feet with lingering stay.

530

King.

Safely may you go your way,  
Ladies. 'Tis my care to see  
That no rude disturbance may  
Befall your hermitage.

## Anasuya &amp; Priyamvada.

We pray  
 That you, sir, so supremely wise  
 Will not from us girls refrain  
 Your pardon for our incomplete,  
 Poor welcome. Humbly we entreat  
 That your noble self may deign 540  
 Us to visit once again.

## King.

O, say not so. 'Tis honour great  
 But your looks to contemplate.

## Sakuntala.

Anasuya, look, I'm stung.  
 My foot a point of *kusa*\* grass  
 Has pierced as after you I pass.  
 And my dress has caught among  
 The brambly *kuruvaka*.† Please  
 Wait for me till I release  
 My garment.

[*Exit with her two companions after making pretexts  
 for delay to steal glances at the King.*]

## King.

Ah is it then so?  
 All gone! Peace heart! I too will go. 550  
 Since first this maiden met my view,

\* *i.e. Poo cynosuroides*—a grass held sacred by the Hindus. Its leaves are very long and taper to a sharp needle-like point.

† A species of *Berberis prionitis* covered with sharp prickles.

How slow my heart moves, O how slow,  
Back to my city to return !  
I have it ! I my retinue  
Will bid encamp them by this glade.  
Ah me ! Ah me ! I cannot turn  
From thinking of this hermit-maid.  
As forward goes my body, so  
Backward ever turns my mind,  
E'en as the silken streamers go  
Of banners'borne against the wind.

560

[*Exit King.*]

(End of Act I.)

---

• Compare the opening lines of Thomas Moore's poem entitled  
" *The Journey Onwards* " :—

" As slow our ship her foamy track  
Against the wind was cleaving,  
Her trembling pennant still look'd back  
To that dear isle 'twas leaving."

## Act II.

*Scene.—A plain on the skirts of the forest.*

*Enter Vidushaka (the Jester) in a melancholy mood.*

**Vidushaka.**

*(Sighing.)*

Heigho ! My companioning  
With this hunt-enamoured King  
Hath to a shadow worn me out.  
“ There a boar crashes ! ” “ There a deer  
Flies from the thicket ! ” Pealing shout  
On shout like this bedins’ my ear.  
While summer’s fiercest ardours burn  
We must till midday range about  
O’er glades where shadows umber thin,  
And since with heat the streams are dried      10  
We must perforce be satisfied  
With such drink as stagnates in  
Pools whose putrid waters turn  
Bitter to the taste or sour  
With the drop from hour to hour  
Of leaves upon them. But sore thirst  
Could drive us to such drink accurst.  
At random quite we dine. Yet worst  
Of all is that we chiefly eat  
Of palate-scorching roasted meat.      20  
Elephants trumpet, horses neigh  
All night and drive sweet sleep away.  
And willy nilly we must wake  
Ere dawn aroused by horrid din

Which those game-greedy sins of sin  
 The forest-ranging huntsmen raise.  
 Is that all ? No. A pimple grows  
 Upon the boil.\* The other day  
 Our king his comrades did forsake  
 And hunting followed in the wake  
 Of a fleet fawn. Straight he goes  
 To a grove where hermits dwell.  
 There, woe's me ! as it befell  
 Through my curs'd lot, he a maid  
 Called Sakuntala sees. 'Tis said  
 Since then never to return  
 Homeward doth his spirit yearn.

30

As my mind such thoughts doth think  
 My eyes forget to have their wink  
 Of sleep, when lo ! the day doth break ;  
 For all which there's no medicine, none !  
 I'm waiting till my royal friend  
 His morn-prayer said, his toilet done  
 This way may his footsteps bend.

40

[*Walking and looking about.*]

But soft ! with wild flowers garlanded  
 With his bow upon his hand,  
 His lady-love upon his heart,  
 Hither tend my monarch's feet.  
 Here then must I take my stand  
 As I were palsied and my part  
 Well playing, respite thus entreat.

50

(*Stands leaning on a staff.*)

*Enter King Dushyanta.*

King.

True, she is difficult to gain,  
 Yet some solace 'tis to know  
 Her thought towards me, and although  
 Love may not its wish attain  
 Yet their mutual longings deep  
 Loving hearts in joy must steep:  
 Ah me ! Lovers by such art  
 Beguile their souls. They love to read  
 Their own thoughts in their loved one's heart. 60  
 Her glance was tender, though 'twere turning  
 On other things, and slow her gait,  
 Be it through coquetry or weight  
 Of her own hips, the words she spake  
 Unto her friend with anger'd brow  
 Who stopt her saying "Go not thou"—  
 Were these not meant for me ? O how  
 Lovers themselves in their fond yearning  
 Pivot of all that happens make !

Vidushaka.

*(Still in the same attitude.)*

O monarch, I am powerless  
 To stretch this arm, so let me bless  
 With words only.

70

King.

*(Smiling.)*

Whence the pain  
 That palsies you ?

## Vidushaka.

You strike a blow  
At mine eye, then ask that I  
Should the subtle cause explain  
Which causes them with tears to flow.

## King.

Good friend, your words transcend my skill  
To comprehend them, be more plain.

## Vidushaka.

When on a river-bank you spy  
A cane-plant that doth imitate  
A hunch-back, King, be pleased to state  
What makes it so—or its own will  
Or the surge infuriate ?

## King.

Doubtless the torrent.

## Vidushaka.

Even so  
'Tis you who wrought my body's woe.

## King.

How can it be ?

---

\* The Vidushaka in the Indian dramas is a Brahmin's son, extremely timid and voracious. He bears a close resemblance to the *parasitus* of the Plautine comedy.

## Vidushaka.

Does it befit  
 A monarch like yourself to quit  
 Your realm ancestral that you may  
 Huntsman-like in forests stray ?  
 I am a Brahman, as you know, 90  
 And ever since you made me go  
 In your suit in quest of game  
 All disjointed is my frame :  
 And since, alas ! these limbs no more  
 Their former ruler's power obey  
 Even for one single day  
 Respite grant me, I implore.

## King.

[*Aside*]

That then is his prayer. I too  
 Listless of the chase have grown  
 And all for Kanwa's daughter. She 100  
 That charmer haunts my memory.  
 No more, now the heart have I  
 To bend my bow against the deer  
 Though shaft-bedight and drawn. And why ?  
 They by ever dwelling near  
 That sweet maiden, to my thought  
 Have the bright contagion caught  
 Of her lustre-shooting eye.

---

**Vidushaka.**

*[Looking at the King's face.]*

There's something else upon his mind

Alas ! to woods I make my moan.

110

**King.**

*[Smiling.]*

It is not proper not to heed

A friend's request, so I refrain

From going to the chase again.

**Vidushaka.**

Long may you live !

*[Moves off.]*

**King.**

Good fellow ! Stay,

List to something I would say.

**Vidushaka.**

Needs must I kingly hest obey.

**King.**

From hunts laborious thou art freed.

In an easier task I need

Thy good help, sirrah.

**Vidushaka.**

Is it, pray,

In eating sweetmeats ?

King.

I'll declare.

120

Vidushaka.

I have the leisure.

King.

Ho ! who's there ?

[*Enter Warder.*]

Warder.

What commands Your Majesty ?

King.

Bid the General come to me.

Warder.

I'll do my liege, as you command.

(*Goes out and returns with Raivataka.*)

[*To the General.*]

This way, Lord General, at hand,

There His Majesty doth stay,

And fain would converse with you. Pray

Be pleased to turn your steps this way.

General.

[*Looking at the King.*]

Hunting, sure, is a harmful thing

To the frame. But our good king

130

Has thriven upon it. Just survey !  
 Incessantly he draws the bow—  
 A toilsome task—and bears the blaze  
 Of the Sun-god's scorching rays  
 With no drop of sweat to flow ;  
 Hence hath he grown a little lean,  
 Yet may no man mark the same  
 So well-fashioned is his frame.  
 Yes, His stalwart Majesty  
 To my eyes appears to be  
 With life's essential might endowed,  
 Like a haughty elephant seen  
 Ranging o'er the mountains green.

140

[*Approaching the King.*]

Victorious be Your Majesty !  
 Full of good game seems to be  
 This forest, for within its shroud  
 We have marked the wild deer ranging free.  
 What further hests are there, O King ?

King.

General, since this man doth say  
 Ill things of our hunting, we  
 Feel no more inclined that way.

150

General.

[*Aside to Vidushaka.*]

Friend Madhavya, do thou cling  
 To thy resolve, while I assay

To humour well our master's mind.

[*To the King. Aloud.*]

My liege, what this mad loon doth speak  
Is sheer folly. Need we seek  
Better proof than we can find  
In you, our royal Master ? See  
How chase reduces fat and thins  
The hunter's waist and makes more fit 160  
For deeds of might the hunter's frame.  
To know what changes rage and fear  
Work upon the minds of beasts—  
This lore hunting teaches clear ;  
Also when the archer's aim  
Doth a moving target hit,  
What high glory then he wins !  
To think the chase should be maligned  
As though it were a vice ! Say, where  
Such amusement, can we find 170  
In other things ?

Vidushaka.

[*Angrily.*]

Out of my sight  
Thou advocate of brutish might !  
Know, our royal Lord hath now  
Returned to his old self and thou  
Son of a slave-girl, do thou roam  
From forest unto forest till  
An old old bear that longs to kill  
A jackal or a deer may fill  
His stomach with thee.

King.

[*To the General.*]

Since, O friend,  
We have come nigh a hermit-home  
Thy counsel, I cannot commend.  
Let bisons plunge in pools of mud  
And butt with horns their waters oft  
While herded 'neath the shadow soft  
The deer may safely chew the cud.  
In the pools let each leading boar  
Uproot the sedge and well he may,  
For with string unstrung once more  
My bow must have some rest to-day.

180

General.

As likes you best.

King.

So now recall  
The archers that have gone before  
And do thou bid the soldiers all  
Disturb not the calm hermit-grove  
But from it far their tumults move.  
Hermits are forbearing, yet  
Within them secretly doth glow  
A hidden principle of ire  
Prone to blaze and this they show  
Only when provoked by fire

190°

Of others that inflame them. Such 200  
The sun-gem\* is though cool to touch.

General.

I'll do as bid.

Vidushaka.

Out of my sight !  
Thou advocate of brutish might ?

[*Exit General.*]

King.

Doff your hunting garb and thou  
Doorkeeper, in thy post abide.

Vidushaka.

You've cleared you of the flies, so now  
Sit you down upon this stone  
O'er which the branches of the tree  
Have spread a shadowing canopy ;  
And I at ease, near to your side 210  
Shall seated be.

King.

Pray go before.

Vidushaka.

Nay after you.

---

*i.e. Suryashila* (i. e. 'beloved of the sun')—a kind of glass lens.

King.

Friend, I must own  
Useless quite thine eyes to be,  
Since they thus have missed the view  
Of what was most worth seeing.

Vidushaka.

Why ?

Stands not yourself before me ?

King.

True !

To each man handsomest is he  
He loveth. 'Tis of her speak I  
Sakuntala that fair maid  
Glory of yon hermit-glade.

220

Vidushaka,

[*Aside.*]

I must encourage him no more  
In this desire. (*Aloud.*) Why will you gaze  
On that hermit-maid when she  
Wed to you can never be ?

King.

Fool !

Say, then, wherefore do men raise  
Charmed eye towards the moon's bright horn\*

---

\* Professor Ludwig Fritze of Koepenick aptly compares :—

“Die Sterne, die begehrt man nicht  
Man freut sich ihrer Frucht,  
Und mit Entzücken blickt man auf  
In jeder heitern Nacht.”

Nor once veil the steadfast lid ?  
 Know Dushyanta never did  
 Bend his heart on thing forbid.

Vidushaka.

How so ?

King.

Kanwa's child is born 230  
 Of a dazzling nymph divine.  
 Ever since she was forsook  
 By her nymph-mother, Kanwa took  
 Her nurture on him. Is not she  
 Like a fresh young jasmine-flower  
 Dropt upon an *arka*-tree ? †

Vidushaka.

As one sick of dates may yearn  
 For sour tamarind, so your heart  
 Scorns the lovely dames that dwell  
 In your palace but to burn 240  
 For a Sakuntala.

King.

Well !

Thou hast not seen her to this hour,  
 So thou may'st such folly prate.

---

† A large and vigorous shrub known to botanists as *Calotropis gigantea*.

**Vidushaka.**

Charming must she be who breeds  
Such wonderment in you.

**King.**

What needs  
More talking ? Ah me ! Did the great  
Artist calmly ponder first .  
O'er all lovely things he erst  
Had made, and were they then combined  
All to mould this wondrous maid ? 250  
For while I His glorious art  
Ponder and her form divine,  
Seems she like a gem to shine  
Matchless among womankind.

**Vidushaka.**

She must surely cast in shade  
All beauteous women.

**King.**

Yet my mind  
Thinks : " This flower whose fragrant scent  
None inhaled yet, this soft spray  
Yet unsevered from its stem  
By rude fingers,\* this fair gem 260

\* Compare Catullus :—

"Ut flos in saeptis secretus nascitur hortis  
Ignotus pecori, nullo contusus aratro.....  
Sic virgo &c."

And Ariosto's exquisite imitation :—

"La verginella è simile alla rosa,  
Che'n bel giardin su la nativa spina,  
Mentre sola, e sicura si riposa" &c.

That none yet wore as ornament,  
 This fresh honey which yet none  
 Tasted, this reservéd fruit  
 For pious deeds in past lives done,  
 This lovely form where none may trace  
 Aught that mars its perfect grace—  
 Who will enjoy it, who can say ? ”

Vidushaka.

Meet is it then that your suit  
 Should succeed, or else that maid,  
 I fear, will surely fall a prey  
 To some hermit-lad whose head  
 Reeks of oil of *ingudi*.\*

270

King.

Not mistress of her will is she,  
 From home her sire is away.

Vidushaka.

Yet you must know how her mind  
 Is towards yourself inclined.

King. .

My friend, you know as well as I,  
 By nature hermit-maids are shy.  
 For she did lower both her eyes  
 When on her I bent my glance ;  
 Her laughter, could not, did not rise

280

From the cause she did advance.  
 Fettered so by modesty  
 Was the love of that sweet maid,  
 That to me it seemed to be  
 Neither hidden, nor displayed.

Vidushaka.

Should she then on your lap have leapt  
 Soon as she saw you ?

King.

. When she fled  
 With her two friends, methinks, I read  
 The feelings of her heart. "A blade      290  
 Of grass has stung my feet" the maid  
 Of the dainty limbs thus said  
 Needlessly ; when she had stept  
 A paces few, back did she turn  
 As though her bark-dress she would free  
 From branches of the brambly tree  
 Though there it clung not.

Vidushaka.

Surely, she  
 Had given you victuals for your way  
 To make your longing heart thus yearn  
 For the hermit-precincts.

King.

Friend,

Frame some pretext, so that we  
 Thither once again may wend.

300

Vidushaka.

Why a pretext, seeing you  
Are Sovereign ?

King.

What is it you say ?

Vidushaka.

You can bid the hermits pay  
Tithe\* to you of wild rice due.

King.

Fool !

They bring tithe of other things

These hermits—things such as defy  
The worth of costliest gems piled high.  
Transient are the tithes that kings  
Bid their other subjects pay,  
The penance-tithe† the hermit brings  
For them, doth survive for aye.

310

A voice behind the Scene.

At last our object we have found.

King.

[*Listening.*]

So grave and calm the voice doth sound,  
They must be hermits.

[*Enter Doorkeeper.*]

\* The Hindu tithe was a sixth part of liquid, flowers, roots, fruit, grass &c.

† i. e. A part of the blessings arising from the self-imposed penance of the hermits accrued to the king who protected them.

---

**Door-keeper.**

Victory

Attend you royal Majesty !  
At the entrance-door there stand  
Two hermit-youths.

**King.**

Without delay,  
Bring them before me.

**Door-keeper]**

At command !

*[To the Hermits.]*

This way, O hermits, come this way. 320

*[Enter Hermits.]*

**First Hermit.**

How majestic is his mien,  
Yet what confidence entreat  
Those features. Saint-like kings are seen  
Of such brow, so haughty-sweet.  
All his folk protecting he  
Treasures daily stores of merit  
And doth a stage of life inherit  
Which by mortals reached can be.  
Far as the high heavens ring  
By seraph-bards sung o'er and o'er  
Praises of this self-curbed king  
Whom as hermit pure they sing

330

With 'King'-title placed before.\*

Second Hermit.

Is this Dushyanta Indra's friend ?

First Hermit.

Why askest thou ? I prithee state.

Second Hermit.

'Tis no marvel that whose arm  
Is like the long bar of the gate  
Of a city, should this earth  
Far as lies its watery girth  
Rule singly. Gods who Demons hate, 340  
When troubled by their war's alarm,  
Hope that their victory is nigh  
When this King his bow doth bend  
Or Indra hurls his bolt from high.

Hermits.

All hail O Monarch !

King.

And I too

Salute you both.

Hermits.

O King, may you

Have good fortune !

---

\* i.e. He is 'king-sage' ('*Rajarshi*') a degree lower than the 'sage' ('*Maharshi*'), a title which Brahmins alone could obtain.

**King.**

Fain would I  
Learn what made you hither hie.

**Hermits.**

Hearing your majesty is near  
The hermits pray—

**King.**

I wish to hear  
What it is that they command.

350

**Hermits.**

As our chief-hermit is not here;  
Our peaceful hermitage a band  
Of lawless Demons doth infest.  
They our holy rites molest.  
Therefore, O Monarch, thee we pray  
In our hermit-grove to stay  
Together with thy charioteer  
For a few nights and to clear  
Of dangers all our home.

**King.**

Nay I

360

Reckon this an honour high.

**Vidushaka,**

*(Aside.)*

Now to the very place you so  
Desired hath Chance pushed you to go.

---

King.

O Raivatak bid charioteer  
Bring chariot, bows, and arrows here.

Hermits.

A worthy act for you whose aim  
Is to follow in the wake  
Of your forefathers' virtuous fame.  
Puru's sons know how to make  
Sacrifices such as wrest  
Fears from bosoms fear-opprest.

370

King.

Proceed, O hermits and I shall  
Your footsteps sue.

Hermits.

May victory  
Ever your royal self befall !

King.

Friend Madhavaya, thee I ask,  
Wouldst thou Sakuntala see ?

Vidushaka.

Then was no danger. Woe is me !  
Now full of peril is the task.

King.

Fear not, with me thou shalt abide.

---

**Vidushaka.**

As wheel-warder at your side.

380

**Raivataka.**

The ready chariot now awaits  
Your victorious journey, King  
And Karabhak from city come  
Doth tidings from your mother bring.

**King.**

From my mother ?

**Raivataka.**

So he states.

**King.**

Bring him.

**Raivataka.**

Our Lord the King is here.  
So Karabhak approach thou near.

**Karabhaka.**

Victorious be your Majesty !  
Your Royal Mother says to you :—  
“ But four days hence approacheth due      390  
That fast which mothers undertake  
To break it eating with their sons  
And mine (long live he !) swift must come  
For parent's honour as is fit.”

King.

Here must I for hermits' sake  
 Answer their great need at once,  
 And there my mother calls me home.  
 Neither ought I to omit.  
 What must I do now ?

Vidushaka.

Do as did

400

Old Trisanku.\* Thyself instal  
 Right in the middle.

King.

I am bid

To different spots by Duty's call.  
 Hence my mind is cleft in twain,  
 As hindered by a rock, amain  
 Bursting parts a river's stream.

(To Vidushaka)

As her own son doth thee esteem  
 My royal mother ; so I pray  
 Repair thou homeward and fulfil  
 Towards her a son's duty ; say

410

---

\* Trisanku was an ancient king of Avodhya (Oudh) whose story is told in the Ramayana. He is said to have requested the sage Vashishtha to raise him alive to heaven, whereupon the irate sage curst the bold king who at once became a *Chandala* (i. e. a pariah). Sage Vishwamitra the antagonist of Vashishtha took up the case of Trisanku and by his supernatural powers raised him alive to heaven. But the gods loth to admit an interloper pushed him down. Vishwamitra, nothing daunted, again raised him up. Thus the unfortunate monarch was condemned to remain in the region between heaven and earth, with his heels raised towards the heavens and his head bent downwards towards the earth. It is said that he still shines as a star in the southern hemisphere.

Here I must remain until  
I the hermits' wish have done.

**Vidushaka.**

Think not one moment that I dread  
Demons.

**King.**

How can that be said  
Of mighty Brahmin as thou art ?

**Vidushaka.**

Now like true-born monarch's son  
I wish to go.

**King.**

My retinue  
With thee will I bid depart.  
I all tumults must remove  
From the hermits' penance-grove

420

**Vidushaka.**

I look a true-born prince.

**King.**

*(To himself)*

'Tis true  
He is loquacious and may tell  
My women-folk of her I woo.  
But let that be !

---

(*Aloud*)

Hear me, my friend,  
A reverence felt in high degree  
For hermits maketh me to wend  
Towards the grove where hermits dwell.  
I have no passion for the maid.  
For what am I and what is she—  
'Mongst the fawns she a stranger bred  
To Love ? Prithee seriously  
Take not what in jest I said.

Vidushaka.

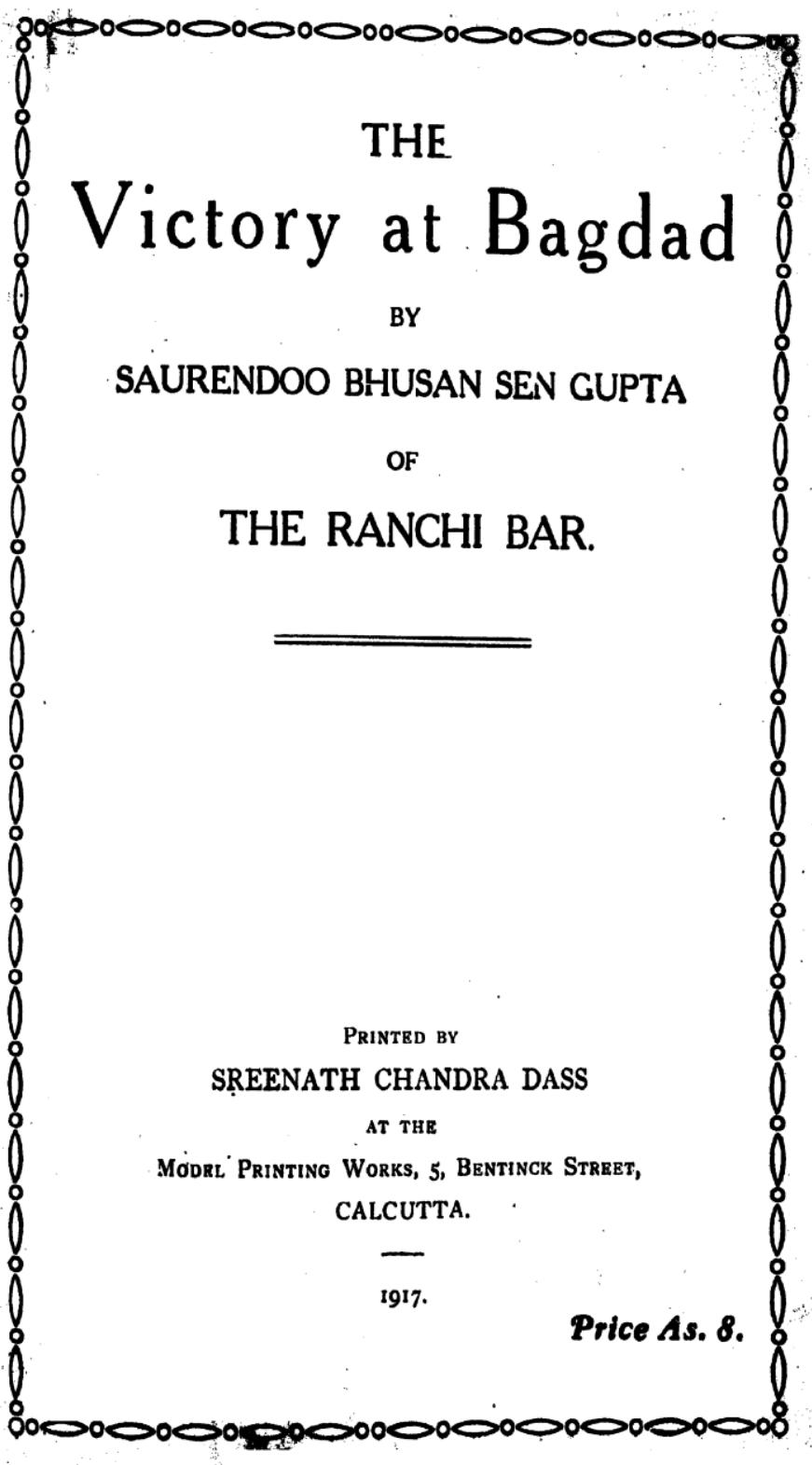
Of course, of course, so must it be.

[*Exeunt.*

End of Act II.







THE  
Victory at Bagdad

BY  
SAURENDOO BHUSAN SEN GUPTA  
OF  
THE RANCHI BAR.

---

PRINTED BY  
SREENATH CHANDRA DASS  
AT THE  
MODEL PRINTING WORKS, 5, BENTINCK STREET,  
CALCUTTA.

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1917.

*Price As. 8.*

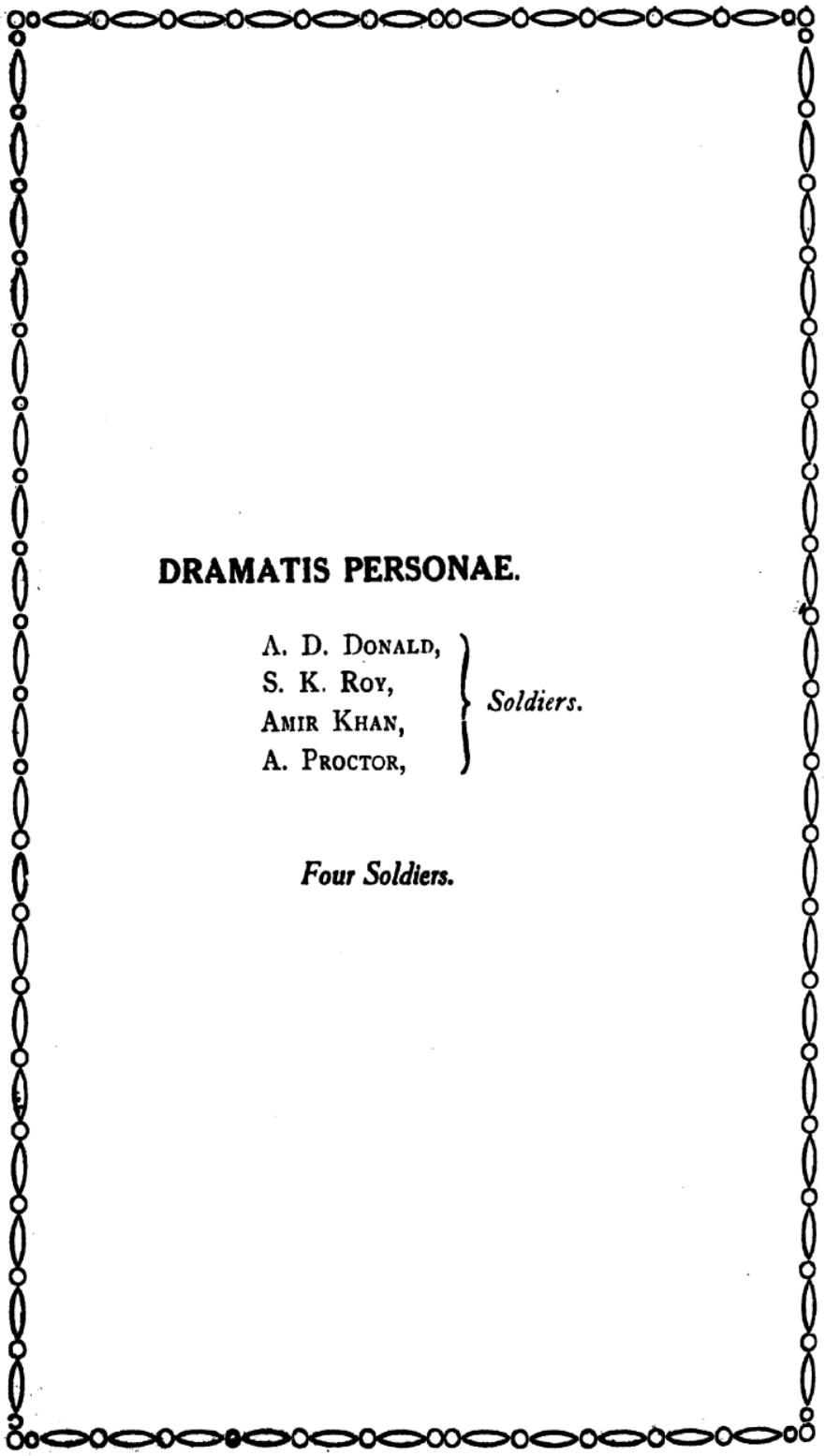




## PREFACE

The proceeds from the  
sale of the book are to  
go to the WAR FUND.

*The Author.*



**DRAMATIS PERSONAE.**

|               |   |                  |
|---------------|---|------------------|
| A. D. DONALD, | } | <i>Soldiers.</i> |
| S. K. ROY,    |   |                  |
| AMIR KHAN,    |   |                  |
| A. PROCTOR,   |   |                  |

*Four Soldiers.*

# The Victory at Bagdad.

---

## SCENE I.

**An open field with Camps in the distance.**

**Enter three Sentinels to keep watch.**

---

**Amir—**

Oh! it is after a long time, we three friends have been thrown together. Really I don't know after how many months we have had this opportunity to open our hearts to each other.

**Donald and Roy—**

Yes, friend! I can't say how happy we were when we heard it announced that we three have been selected to keep watch this night.

**Roy—**

Oh! it is a beautiful night!

How solemn the palm-groves from distance look!  
Oh! what a moon in heaven crystal clear!  
No speck of cloud dims it: how grand the moon,  
With her train starry, sails, to scatter peace  
Any joy; the camp, the field, goliath guns,  
The huge, untold war things, all, in its glow,  
Lie bath'd, rapt, cold, as if devoid of all  
Their fatal fiery virtues. What contrast  
With day! the night is like a night of where  
I was born. Ah! what visions, rainbow-hued,  
Kaleidoscopic, like the magic wand,

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

Of sorcerers from Egypt, in my mind,  
It conjures up; a numbness opiate,  
My bosom fills and fails my memory.  
My heart is heavy with delicious pain.  
Ah memory! the sword two-edged—of bliss  
And torture— Oh! friend! by the Almighty,  
Our Father, forg'd: mysterious like things  
We see in this world; where is good, a tree,  
Oft evil-rooted, bending with sweet fruits  
Of wisdom; only God knows which is which.  
Methinks, an age I've parted from the land,  
Which shine with balmy sheen, that other spots  
Mere envy pining. The serene spring smile,  
Her robe, in purest green, with tissues shot,  
In Nature's most select loom spun. There holds,  
In regal splendour, the six grand seasons,  
Their courts, by turns; her darling, each,  
Close clasping in the flowing folds of skirts,  
The skirts of their apparels – to bestow  
The loveliest kiss possible. Ah! there,  
The morning beauty and profundity  
Of evening, are ambrosial; they charm  
The sense of pain away:  
Where trees and all around dance with a glee,  
That cannot but be His: whose shady vales  
Much vocal with multitudinous strains,  
Teeming with gloom like twilight, spell, all day  
Dream rapture; and the Dryads and Satyrs play  
There hide and seek, each other, chasing rapt:—  
Vales sparkling oft with thousand silver rills;  
On whose smooth margin, glossy with trim grass,  
The sylvan fairies trip gay, sunning while  
Their streaming tresses, raven black, at noon:

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

Whereof, the birds discourse enchanting notes,  
Delight-distilled ; and ever breeze in hearts  
Peace wafts ; while sporting with tangl'd ebon locks  
Of damsels. Ah ! there, what blue sky, all day !!  
The vaulted dome, how, calm, serene, and clear !  
Redolent of divine philosophy,  
That sages in immemorial time sang,  
In voice that rings through all the ages. It straight  
Soaring aloft in tremulous heights, cuts  
For good, the knot of fate, free-will, and birth,  
Necessity, to make us bear the load—  
The world load— with such a heroic grace.  
Where earth, so bounteous, as bumper crop  
For asking yields ; and reigns what peace and calm.

### Donald—

Quite glad to know that you dear, a country has  
That can of such things boast ; but I have failed  
To see your country and to share your food  
As yet once ; I've good deal heard this night.  
You tell me oft of peace there you enjoy :  
But what you say, methinks, clean proves that peace  
Like this, before, none knew. The British, it's  
That unto Ind brought it all.

### Roy—

Ask Khan—he knows what a glory peace has shed  
O'er India there ; what uncommon ring  
Of halo, born of virtues, play round her.  
With priceless gems of happiness, plenty,  
And bliss is set this crown ; such majesty,  
The British, her, have dowered with ; I read  
Not history much in young school days, oft though

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

Now I repent. The golden book of life,  
And wisdom History is : of knowledge cave,  
The open sesame. Man's history is  
The only thing we need care for and know.  
What nobler theme, than science of all races,  
And mankind, at an age, whose badge, world known  
Is science—the top—fashion, mania !  
What better light, more profitable guide  
Than this, infallible in trouble of ours,  
There can be, I know not. In by-gone days,  
No peace like this the land enjoy'd. Ask Khan  
To tell what peace was like those days.

### Amir—

Belike, the land resembl'd one, whose pulse  
Beat weak, whose heart beat feeble ; in whose veins  
The blood did sprightly not dance ; cold were .  
Whose hands and feet. The zone of sceptre's force,  
The royal seat—the capital—defin'd.  
Whereas, of other distant provinces,  
Their nearness to the heart—the capital,  
Denoted, was, index to its force.  
The farthest provinces—the hands and feet—  
Were cold at last : confusion, anarchy,  
Stalk'd widely there. Each king's demise let loose  
Disorder and her child red havoc. Peace  
Was not at home among us here. She was  
Oh ! out of doors most times : was ever she  
Of the good faith for her protection sure ?  
Guarantee any was vouchsaf'd to her  
Here never ; she was left to shift as best  
She could for herself : like a lamb she was  
Amid wolves doubtless,—ever ill at ease.

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

Upon the Government, e'er heavily hung  
The spectre of grim fate : it blew oft, where  
It listed ; none was sure what to expect,  
When Government with princes chang'd. Peace,  
A sensitive rare plant, of regions pure,  
A growth distinct, with thousand shiny boughs,  
Has under the mild equable kind rays  
Of British rule, so flourish'd : she has now  
Here a firm footing ; she unlike old days  
In open air lives not ; but home now has,  
For comfort and security. She knows  
A father she has, who, a vigil keeps,  
Each moment over her. And then world-known  
The English education, which—the sun  
Of British rule,—to India has giv'n  
A vivifying life unknown before ;  
Ideas of sweet feelings, unity,  
Illumine us ; and beams in hearts of all,  
Friend ! now a light of broad humanity.  
But what most charms me of the British mind,  
Is its stead balance, perfect, ne'er disturb'd  
Or lost, ne'er sway'd by any gust of wind.

### Donald—

Both Amir and Roy talks as if they are very well read. Their appearance is also noble. Do they come of high family as me? More by and by (aside). I am very glad to hear you speak so highly of the British rule. Your talk has enlightened me much. But I think when you make the comparison you bear in mind that the world in general has also progressed much since the time you speak of.

[They pace like sentries.

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

**Roy—**

By the way, just tell us Donald how did you spend the days before you joined the war. I am very eager to know this.

**Amir—**

I am also eager to know.

**Donald—**

How with my hounds, ere rosy morn,  
The hill-tops kiss'd, and crown'd them with pure gold,  
—A peerless picture which in vain to ape  
E'er Art tries;—I, the glens, full hard, on horse  
My Dolly, scour'd to ferret the foxes out!  
How swift it flew, awhile, with hooves all shod,  
Hot, striking fire off the granite: it seem'd  
To hardly touch the ground; how light I felt,  
As the fresh breeze more bracing—thousand times—  
Than iron tonics of the human make,  
My forehead kiss'd cool, dallying with my locks.  
How like ethereal beings or larks blithe,  
I felt when riding on my horse. How lov'd  
I Dolly, clean and sleek,—more than a man  
It was; how deep when I approach'd it neigh'd.  
And then when came the storm—and in our parts  
It oft so comes,—I view'd from my lone study  
The elemental orgies, all attention.

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

What sombre motley hues diversified  
And decked the hills!—now blue, now purple grey :  
How like preflood, lost mammoths they—the hills—  
Against the dark sky, silhouetted look'd !  
How pour'd the rains ! the alleys ran, full swift,  
Down splashing waterfall like. But methinks,  
[He points to the sky.

In yonder welkin lightning darts ; to storm  
A sign, what else ; for I remember, friend !  
My country storm oft lightning led :—yes then—  
At night, enchanted how, I, lost, beheld  
The moon all splendid rise and flood the knolls.  
The wavy valleys : what a pattern—board !  
Of shade and light upon the ground it wove.  
All slept in dreamland, it seem'd ; wh'd have thought  
Of such soul melting night just after storm.  
The war began ; the call to arms reach'd me ;  
—What child can stay home when his mother calls ;—  
I join'd the war, came here. But Amir, Roy,  
Your friendship has been a God send to me :  
My home—sweet home—it has made me forget.

**Roy—**

Ah ! friendship pure ! it's never dimm'd by dirt  
Of self : it blesses all that worships it ;  
Against the satan self, a talisman ;  
A never failing charm : a cup not earthy ;  
Whose nectar'd one deep draught makes God of us.  
Ah ! there the bugle sounds ; how it's ! our watch  
So soon it ends ? to the unfooted Time,  
Whose speed on need depends, our talk set wings.

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

### SCENE II.

**An open field—Amir and Donald engaged in conversation leaning on motor cycles ; not far from a ruined house.**

**Donald—**

The sky is cloudy still ; how fierce strikes  
The red huge sun from the palm-trees between.  
But what ! the lamps are smash'd, are they all gone ?  
How shall we go sans light in such a night ?  
Oh ! I see it is done all by the storm.

**Amir—**

Oh ! what a storm ! we were undone. I thought,  
When started we for this our work, the sky.  
And all around was ominously calm.  
All on a sudden, then burst the wind.  
How it blew, rag'd and roar'd. Oh God it seem'd,  
Ten thousand cannons blowing up to dust  
This globe. We thought, the end of world was come :  
No more the sun would rise : nor we behold  
The sunlit face of this fair earth again !  
The banks of monstrous clouds, that scudd'd o'er,  
Seem'd, would break ne'er. It look'd eternal night :  
A pall of gloom the earth around all drap'd :  
Jagged lightning flash'd from end to end, above,  
Its bosom ripping : by the roots, giant trees  
Were torn up : branches crack'd, were split :  
Some went like arrows, speeding till they stuck  
In other far off trees like pointed pins.

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

Like bullets sands sing'd, pierc'd us : clouds of them  
Against our face were driv'n, blinding us.  
How many birds, fell dead, and shriek'd—none knows :  
A carnival, it was, of wind, lightning,  
And thunder : then the Heavens open'd.

### Donald—

The rain has ceased now. But how are we to go home : it is growing dark ; and I am afraid I have lost our way. Hallow ! here an old man comes : perhaps he may tell us something about the whereabouts. Let us acquaint him with our plight.

### *Enter Farmer.*

### Farmer—

What the world has come to ! has it turn'd to khakhi ? but they seem not our allies the Huns ; they are of the opposite party—the Allies—who have recently conquered this part of the country.

### Donald (to Amir)—

He seems a man advanced in life. But what on earth brings him here at this time ? Great God be thanked (to the farmer)—I say father : we are British soldiers. We cycled on an errand ; but our lamps are all broken ; and then we are afraid as it is getting dark, we won't be able to find the way out. But really we are surprised to see you of such venerable age here at this time !

### Farmer—

My tale would make one weep ; so painful sad,  
I once was worth, a prince's ransom whole.  
The barge of life—all sails with fortune fill'd  
Smooth glided on world ocean ; all pink look'd :

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

What message perfum'd deep with cheer and love,  
The morn and even daily spoke. Methought,  
The sun and moon, the great world soul,  
Through which, e'er look, beam, speak eternal truth,  
Wove witchery, which man's speech fails to paint.  
But now as lowly wretched, as the worm,  
That crawls upon the earth, I am ; the war  
Began, and daily tale of horror, woe,  
Of havoc,—no poet's frenzy could conceive,—  
The heart of pity thorough pierc'd ; and tear,  
Tears voluble—my sides much pain'd ;  
And cold lay sleep awake all night fear-smit.  
Like locust swarms, Huns—whisper fill'd our ears,—  
Upon a village, fall and suck, ere they  
Depart, to marrow bones. In constant fear  
Of this, a scourge more dreadful than before,—  
E'er human wit was bid contend—we wept,  
Wore knees, and pray'd and pass'd our days half dead.  
One day at dead of night, when sleep with Peace  
Its vizier, rul'd the earth, like sweeping flood,—  
Of ruin the courier, ruthless— a Hun horde—  
Our allies, Sir—of Turks—upon us broke ;  
Demanded meat and drink with blood-shot eyes :—  
Food, drink we gave, Sir, everything, indeed.  
The morrow woke ; and life and wrath from eyes  
Of us all molten, darted, flow'd and burned  
Us fully ;—our fat wondrous calves to see  
Slain, murder'd ; and my son of two ten years,  
A flower, fed with innocence snow-pure,  
My only child—pole star—on pain of death,  
The part of butcher forc'd to play. It hung  
Like cloud on cloud their dark crime. Next they fell  
Upon the store house, its last drop of juice

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

To squeeze, to drain. At even they departed ; —  
Their lust gorg'd, pamper'd brimful, with rich loot,—  
My men, my cattles, and all they could lay  
Their hands upon :—my son, my hope, my joy,  
My life,—I have no wife—she died young—  
This child—whereby, my thread of life  
Sole hangs—from me bound all wise, nearly they  
Tore : specks, white, blue, all o'er the world flower'd :  
Before my eyes they swam ; a veil of mist  
The world drew over it ; to a black point  
The sun grew thin : my senses left me void :  
Giddy down I fell at their feet, prostrate ;  
Imploring him—my son—in sobs, for all,  
In their greed, they, who never scruple the crime  
Of murder for a bad brass farthing, kept  
As charm, might ask..... (weeping)  
Last they relented, gave my son, their fill  
Of revenge, on my house, once stately proud,  
They spent ;—all but one razing to the ground.  
This day, my son on urgent work, I sent ;  
But he not yet, though past an hour, come back ;  
And so to seek him I am here.

### Amir—

In yonder ruin of some time house, that roof'd  
Us, from the wrath of elements, a youth  
We met, who, Schiraz, gave out as his name.

### Farmer—

The same, the same, Great God be praised.

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

**Donald—**

Oh father verily melts our heart at grief  
Of yours : more anon while you show the way.

### SCENE III.

**A Hospital Camp, Donald and Amir lying on beds  
hurt. Amir awake, Donald sleeping.**

*Enter Roy.*

**Roy—**

How is Donald ?

**Amir—**

Doctor says that Donald is out of danger. What a terrible  
battle oh ! all's well that ends well. All praise to Almighty ;  
(the looks up with folded hands) we have won Bagdad.

[Donald wakes.]

**Donald—**

Ah ! what my dear friend, Roy ! I see : to me  
Than life and light who dearer is—I have  
No brother, sister, none, alas ! I am,  
An utter stranger to the sweet pure love,  
Affection that one's brothers and sisters  
E'er links ;—affection which like songs of dove  
(I've heard men oft, to speak such things like these)  
Invisible, at clear and warm noon-day,  
From timid tendrils of a bushy wood,  
Of leafy spring, far from the jarring din  
Of Mammon's worship, showers melody  
Of peace : or like the rhythmic pensive lap  
Of Thames waves, against the shores at eve,

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

When half the hemisphere composes itself  
To meditation of the Great,—the Good,  
Beyond conception of us, perfect, pure,—  
A glimpse of the far-off infinite,  
Unknowable. at interval permits ;  
Or like the moon in stainless heaven high,  
At midnight with the song of rare nightingale  
Sonorous, off and on, makes us forget,  
This worldly life, transporting us to climes ;—  
The sun where mellow shines and which ne'er knows  
Bereavement, poignant parting or the ills  
Which rack and prey and tear us here so much.  
But friendship ! Roy of yours has been to me  
More than the love of any one, I know.  
Long I yearn'd, waited for one to confide  
My weals and woes in : men I found, but none  
Were meet to share my thoughts, my griefs and joys.  
At last, I found you here—a priceless gift  
Of heaven sure. I know each minute fact,  
Each detail, point by point, how you, me saved,  
From jaws of death : how tenderly my friend  
You took up me, when death in hundred shapes,  
In myriad forms, grinn'd and shot weird glances.  
But what's the result of the battle ?  
I fairly remember doctor telling me that we have won  
Bagdad. Is it really true ?

**Roy—**

We've Bagdad won, the classic town of old,  
The London, Paris, Delhi, of those days,  
Where Alexandria, Suez, Ispahan,  
Cape Comorin, Calecot, Borneo,

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

Timor, and India—the famed ports  
Of the then world—their sapphires, cloths of gold  
And muslins,—light and fine like gossamer,—  
Pearls, rubies, ivories and friend ! what not !  
Like tributary rivers pour'd—all flow'd—  
To Bagdad—the deep ocean—heap on heap.  
The world-old Bagdad of the Caliphs,  
Who made a second paradise of it  
On earth : with milk white marbles, cupolas,  
Domes, minarets, and palaces set it.  
The city shone like the supreme effort,  
Of a Raphelle or Michael Angelo :  
The houries danced and played in lovely halls ;  
From sweet palm lemon groves, the bulbul sang,  
At all hours amorous : and silver founts,  
In yards, to keep time, play'd : the Bagdad  
Whose very dust is fragrant with and shrines  
A story of the Ar'ban nights ! The Bagd .  
Of Haroun-al-Rachid the Great, who drank  
From agate vessels, ate from wares all pearl ;  
And days and nights—its several parts—saw  
In clocks that sent to the hour struck, men, knights,  
In equal number to proclaim the Time.  
We, friend the hope of Huns—their silk-spun dream  
Of a realm Belg to Bagd—with railway wrought,  
To dust have shiver'd flat.

### Donald—

I am glad beyond measure to know that the British flag  
now waves over Bagdad. I think that we did 'our bit'  
that day.

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

**Amir—**

How goodly, gallantly, we fought ; the Gods,  
Their bowers must have left, this courage here,  
Display'd in us—their image—to notice.  
Belike home they all went full sad, heart broke ;  
Their faultless courage seeing mirror'd such.  
Oh! what hell boom'd the guns ; how thunder'd maxims ;  
How rifles scream'd ; how bayonets hit, beam'd,  
Sword hiss'd and horse hoov's clash'd. Till the last day  
When life shall fail me, memory of this  
With me play trick :—this battle to the thrust  
Of bayonets. depicting to my mind.  
My dreams oft me would cheat ; and many times,  
Amid my thousand little works of world,  
In Di'la bank I would be after life ;  
Rehearsing graphic all that took place here.  
Boat loads of men, battalions : —the pink, pride—  
Of us, were lowered : all clean swept like straws  
Before gorge stream or a tornado dash.  
Of Britain's life all in the flush of youth,—  
Her best, all in their prime verve, squads and squads  
Stept, manly, knowingly, for their great mother,  
Above all high—to lay their lives, all love  
Aglow, at war God's altar. Six brave batches  
Undaunted Di'la fill'd : methought with bosom—  
The planks—they would the river span—a blood-bridge.  
The stream, of woe, to tell the ocean wide,  
All red, dirg'd slowly on : sulphureous  
The breath of heaven—of fire death, stench mixt  
—A horrid mixture—turn'd : it lost its smell  
Its native smell of peace. The elements  
Weed donn'd of grief, of colour that the earth

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

Pale shrouds when sets the crescent moon at night.  
Light, piebald, lurid, hundred tongu'd flamed up,  
On either side of it, to make the scene  
More ghastly, from war missiles with death tipp'd.  
But dust and smoke from hoov's and guns—  
Of righteous God the vicegerents sure—  
Our fortress, victory, prov'd and won the day.

**Roy—**

But Donald ! your and Amir's cool courage,  
The day determined. Time that all defeats,  
His feet upon all puts and turns to dust,  
Unwonted in its niche, a memorial  
All gold, will ever keep of you two.  
When ranks and ranks were mown down, fell like corn  
When ripe under swains' scythe ; or like sear'd leaves  
When wintry gusts to marrow stirs the trees :  
When life like water of a broken dam,  
Profusely flow'd to mix with the Great life ;  
When organisation, the soul of you,  
—Of Britain's greatness ! took such painful breath ;  
When a wild gloom the spacious firmament,  
Canopied, and from sight it blotted all ;  
When hollow eye'd, pale and gaunt despair  
Like vultures hover'd over head : what courage  
Alone was of avail ! like intellect,  
Divorc'd from moral force it's sure to come  
To ruin : it's you then friend with doughty zeal,  
Unwonted pluck and judgment—a marvel  
Of combination—for in the sheer stress  
Of action, the function of the brains  
Is oft at dead lock, nay paralysed  
To nil :—it's you ! then led a boat of men

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

With Amir as help-mate ; it's he who leapt  
Next from the ranks to succour you dear friend !  
—To die if death (who knows) perchance hits you ;  
For life is not worth living if you dear !  
Leaves us here, desolate and lone to mourn  
Your death :—oh ! with these handful of brave men  
You cross'd the stream, then friend the other side  
Gain'd ; a firm footing secur'd, pav'd the way,  
And laid the foundation for victory.  
What time in balance hung the battle fate  
With one great stroke of valour you at once  
Decided it. The honour due to one,  
Who first discovers or espies something,  
Like Newton or Columbus is to you  
All due.

**Donald—**

Your speech, your way of talking ; —all speak of something  
more than you seem.

**Amir and Roy—**

And friend ! your appearance, your courtesy, your manners,  
all show too that there must be something more in you  
than meet the eye.

**Donald—**

I see then we all come of high family.

**Amir and Roy—**

All glory to the British flag that have brought us all to-  
gether of high family eager to give our lives for the same  
cause ; and have united us (of three different religions)  
with a bond of friendship that will not abate a jot though  
ages may come and go.

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

**Roy—**

What's the time? when are the doctor and the nurses to come? Amir—(looking up at the watch lying on the table). It is just 2 p.m. The doctor and the nurses are to come at six.

**Donald—**

I feel a curiosity to know how did you both feel before you joined the war, and what did you do to join it. I think I remember Roy once told me that he joined the war after the Indian Government had given Indians permission to enlist.

**Roy—**

The day I well remember, when the news  
Me reach'd, that fit and worthy judg'd I am  
For entry as a soldier: how sore ach'd  
My heart, as I down tumbl'd on the thought—  
Before the news was out—that Fate, bad luck,  
Against me might the balance turn. Oh! God,  
My hope of serving my king's cause thus lost:—  
The world seem'd nought: I lik'd not e'en the sight  
Of them—my kith and kin—who fed my life;  
A moment's separation from whose side  
At other times, it seem'd to strangle me;  
Sleep—soothing sleep—me left; e'er and anon I woke,  
My dizzy brain refusing to submit  
To the suave influence of mighty sleep.  
Nothing seem'd to please me: all things their charms  
For me oh! lost. How, I, my friend and all,  
In whom the flame of consciousness burn'd bright,  
Now flush'd, now pal'd, now sweat'd copious;—

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

The stages—the rungs of hope and despair : —  
Whene'er the thought of thought—the crowning thought  
—And oft this thought bulk'd large in mind of us,—  
Indeed our meat and drink it last became,—  
Of the great judgment day, when all be judg'd  
Unfit or fit to be a soldier, beat  
Against our breast. The daily round of work  
Their due share of attention lost We group'd  
In knots for gossip, laid plans, held counsels  
How success we may win.

### *Enter four Soldiers.*

#### **First Soldier—**

What's the talk about? You seem to be very busy. Is it a very important thing?

#### **Second Soldier—**

I know that you three are great friends; but that does not mean that every thing you three would monopolise between yourselves. You always seem to be on the look out for an opportunity when to open your hearts. That's bad after all, especially for soldiers (laughing).

#### **Donald—**

It is nothing private which you cannot hear. Roy was only telling us how did he feel before he joined the war. It is simply thrilling; I wish you all had been present to hear him. Very good; let us hear Amir. And I think Amir joined the war before Indians were given permission to enlist, so he told me as far as I remember.

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

Amir—

Worth is my history recital—my tale  
How I this conflict, partook of : I came  
As motor driver first. Those days the gate,  
The pathway leading to the army realm  
Against us all was clos'd ; taboo'd we were  
To put the khakhi on ; but so eager  
And zealous I became, my king to serve :  
Speech fails to give a due idea friend !  
And what became I !!! a discomfort prey'd  
Upon me. It me haunted day and night :  
Weary I beat my brains to find a way  
Out of this difficulty : fain my brains  
Would I have dash'd against some wall to seek  
A clue to serve my king. At night I lay  
Wakeful and tossing in the bed. It felt  
Hard, stiff and thorny, pinching me all night :  
A feeling of dull pain from head to foot,  
Me drap'd. Fain would I have leapt into fire.  
I thought how day by day the vital spark  
Of Britain's lion strength, this war drains out :  
How it of Britain's manhood, heavy toll,  
Each minute, takes ; how oh ! the English homes  
That erelong buzz'd and murmur'd with sweet talk  
And lively gossip, gushing from affairs  
Of household, are as grave yards or dried streams  
In arid deserts, silent, and drear now.  
Oh ! homes and boards which rung and echo'd ere  
With din and hum of joy and merriment ;—  
Which throb'd with warmth of family circle  
At even, round the genial clean hearth,

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

Are now with low dull sobs, convulsive groans  
And tearful utterances and cries all fill'd.  
The air, there laden with past memories,  
Complains and moans from room to room all day :  
The doors and windows on there rusty hinges  
Oft making creak. How many homes, I thought,  
Have fatherless, husbandless, oh ! become !  
Men of blue blood, the child of luxuries,  
Of rosy routine,—who before e'er walk'd  
In velvet shoes : at whose one gentle call,  
A single nod, or moving howe'er slight  
Of fingers, twenty servants scrambl'd, ran,  
To cater for them ;—now in mires, knee-deep,  
Foul trenches, standing crane-like passes, oh ! God,  
Unwash'd, without any sleep or any rest,  
Days after days, nights after nights with death  
Full staring in the face :—a helpless prey  
To all the fickle moods of atmosphere :  
No matter whether them the scorching sun,  
In summer, bakes ; or the benumbing frost  
In winter stiffens ; or the pouring rain  
Thorough wets ; they stand like rock unmov'd firm :  
While I, like them, a fellow subject, bah !  
Lay sunk in all the pre-war luxuries :  
Not even a faint breath of the great war  
—The titanic struggle which the world engulfs  
Disturbing me : of these things and the like  
I thought and thought : they smote and stung me sharp  
Like bites of scorpion all o'er the body.  
As when the father, the sole earning member,—  
Bread winner—of a large big family,—  
Each one dependent for their meat and drink  
On him—all on a sudden, one day, dies ;

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

The bigger children, who their plight full grasps,  
On whom the burden of the family  
Plump falls,—though none fit for the weighty task—  
Become despondent, listless and morose :—  
Each, moment thinking of their dead father :—  
So I become despondent and morose.

At last

The post of chauffeur to my rescue came.  
At least could carry soldiers, I, at times :  
Or to them cater when need be : this thought  
Me solac'd partly : I left college ; next,  
Apprentic'd myself in a workshop, learnt  
The motor driving technics, thoroughly ;  
Applied for chauffeur's post, got it ; my stars  
Were sure in the ascendant and came here ;  
And after a few months the war I joined.

**Donald—**

Yours is a tale that would have done honour to the Gods  
And so we—

*Enter Proctor.*

**Roy—**

But Proctor is coming with a letter.

[Every one turns in the same direction

I don't know what it means.

[Proctor gives the missive to Roy.

What !!! a Victoria Cross for Donald and Military Crosses for  
Amir and myself. I can't understand how I deserve it.

**Donald—**

It is as it should be.

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

### CHORUS.

#### I

God save from ill our King and Queen ;—  
Of Britain, land o'er seas ;  
Our pious Sovereigns who hearts win ;  
Each, home of virtue, is.

#### II

The Lord of men with creeds that rule  
The world this day from prime ;—  
Of land and seas where sun's ne'er cool ;  
But shines with moon in chime.

#### III.

Of beasts that the green pasture roam :  
Of beasts that prey and tear :  
Of fowls that range the free blue dome :  
Of fowls that homes our cheer.

#### IV.

The mighty twain who tend us all,  
With love of Supreme Him,  
In whom pearls moves wan pity's call ;  
And they their eyes make dim

#### V.

Whose heart e'er swell, whose pulse e'er beat,  
With weal of us and woe ;—  
Their subjects whether great and fit,  
How humble, how so low.

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

### VI.

Who think and think and e'er think  
Of us—no less their sons :  
What filial ties with them us link  
That anger know not once.

### VII.

The laws they've made ;—such wholesome laws,  
That evil touch to core :  
They put their feet upon the cause,  
And stray away no more.

### VIII.

From door to door the laws keep watch,  
Take note of each wrong, care ;  
The right they keep ; the wrong despatch ;  
Bestow each man his share.

### IX.

From door to door the cup of ease,  
To all, they shelter, give :  
They, image of all laws of His,  
Whereby the world does live.

### X.

With mercy temper'd all their laws ;—  
Of sacred lore, they born :  
The wind it fall : the tiger pause  
Before their solemn horn.

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

### XI.

Like sun the rays of justice, love,  
Alike all over shine :—  
The rich who sleep in silk above ;  
The poor who toil and pine.

### XII.

Whose sceptre showers joy and peace ;  
Whose crown beams calm all o'er :  
Who never laugh but comfort, bliss,  
In hearts of us all pour.

### XIII.

The crown they wear of jewel seems ;  
Of thorn it's made of sure ;  
Of anxious thoughts full sharp it teems ;  
How thousand griefs to cure.

### XIV.

Our saviour next to God the Great ;  
In heart's depth we adore.  
Whenever we pray for our fate  
Our heart for them first soar

### XV.

Oh ! God thou bless our King and Queen,  
Their children, kith and kin ;  
With health and peace the blessed twin,  
With life long joy serene.

### XVI.

Oh ! God bless ministers, Houses two ;—  
Our Britains bulwak twain ;  
*Who e'er the golden mean pursue ;—*  
Of justice, faultless fane.

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

### XVII.

Oh! God our sovereigns' army bless;  
The army foremost keen:  
Its path may victory e'er trace,  
With glory on its wing.

### XVIII.

Oh! God our sovereigns' navy side:—  
The dread despair of foes:—  
The lofty heritage, Britain's pride  
May prove e'er alien's woes

### XIX.

The navy that clean sweeps the deep,  
And home the hostile braves;  
Whose balmy breath o'er British fief,  
The flag of peace e'er waves.

### XX.

The sun of commerce, wealth, Fine Arts,  
Under its blessing shine;  
Be it eternal awe that thwarts  
The crafty foes design.

### XXI.

Our sovereigns' majesty may it,  
Escort, e'er as in yores;  
Be it the moon of might to twit,  
All stars of other shores.

## THE VICTORY AT BAGDAD.

### XXII.

Like rainy rivers, Britain's trade  
May overflow the side ;  
Unique worth, honesty it wed ;  
As long as world may bide.

### XXIII.

Britain, of peace, be morning lark,  
The lark that just at dawn,  
With strains of peace, floods heaven's arc,—  
With God's one only song.

### XXIV.

The lark that reminds ere day begin,  
Ere men begin their works ;  
The note of peace mid all chagrin  
The ruling note that lurks.

### XXV.

God Save from ill our King and Queen ;—  
Our noble sovereigns great,<sup>1</sup>  
What garden of peace, joy soothing,  
Have they their lands out laid.











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